



# FEMA

## NEWS RELEASE STATE/FEDERAL DISASTER FIELD OFFICE JOINT INFORMATION CENTER



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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **DISASTER CRISIS COUNSELING AVAILABLE IN SKAGIT, SNOHOMISH AND WHATCOM COUNTIES**

EVERETT, WA – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved a \$57,566 Crisis Counseling Immediate Services grant for the Washington Department of Social and Health Services to pay for free counseling services in Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom Counties. The program is aimed at assisting those who had their lives thrown into disarray and confusion by the severe storms and flooding, October 15-23, 2003.

“Disaster stress is a normal reaction when people are uprooted, suffer the loss of precious personal possessions, and are traumatized by the ferocity of severe weather,” said Diane R. Offord, the state official in charge of disaster recovery. “Counseling enables them to regain control of their lives.”

Children and the elderly are special concerns following a major disaster. Counselors visit schools, neighborhood meetings, shopping centers, and faith communities to listen and help those in need.

“FEMA recognizes that disasters cause emotional and psychological trauma as well as the physical devastation seen by the eye,” said Anthony Russell of FEMA, the official in charge of federal recovery operations. “We fund crisis counseling to help people recover from all aspects of the harmful effects of a disaster.”

For Disaster Outreach Services assistance residents should call 360-416-7099.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

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Note to Editors: Disaster information is available on FEMA's World Wide Web at <http://www.fema.gov> or the Washington Emergency Management Division at <http://emd.wa.gov>